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Progress, challenges and future strategies in basic education

Summary

The Executive Board last reviewed a report on UNICEF strategies in basic education at its 1995 session (E/ICEF/1995/16), five years after the convening of the World Conference on Education For All held at Jomtien, Thailand.

The present document reports on progress to date in achieving universal basic education, as well as on the challenges and future strategies in basic education. Following a brief overview in chapter I, chapter II reviews the situation at the end of the decade. Chapter III presents the evolution of UNICEF education activities since mid-decade, and chapter IV focuses on the challenges faced in meeting the decade goals. The strategies for meeting the future goals in education are detailed in chapter V. A draft recommendation for Executive Board approval is contained in chapter VI.

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I. Background and overview

A. Revisiting the World Declaration on Education For All

> "Every person — child, youth, adult — shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning." (World Declaration on Education For All, Article I).

1. In 1990, some 1,500 participants from 155 nations and dozens of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and development agencies met in Jomtien, Thailand, to adopt the World Declaration on Education For All (EFA). This Declaration and its Framework for Action were remarkably insightful documents; they analysed the challenges and opportunities facing the last decade of the twentieth century and proposed that countries set targets for the year 2000 based on an "expanded" vision of universal basic education. These were: (a) expansion of early childhood care and development (ECCD) activities; (b) universal access to, and completion of, primary education; (c) improvement in learning achievement; (d) reduction of the adult illiteracy rate to one half of its 1990 level; (e) expansion in basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults; and (f) increased acquisition of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sustainable development (World Conference on Education For All, Framework for Action, 1990).

2. UNICEF, both in preparation for the World Summit for Children, which followed the World Conference on EFA, and in subsequent programming during the first half of the decade, placed greatest emphasis on enrolment in, and completion of, primary schooling. Now, as the end of the decade approaches, the EFA Declaration is being revisited by many of its original sponsors, including UNICEF. As a result, a renewed commitment, reflected in the UNICEF agenda for children beyond 2000, is being made to the broader vision of basic education which the Declaration so eloquently proposes.

B. Programming in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

> "1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:
>
> (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all; ..." (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28).
>
> "1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
>
> (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; ..." (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29).

3. For UNICEF, a special incentive in revisiting the EFA Declaration is the imperative imposed upon the world by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The general principles and articles of the Convention insist on primary education for all, characterized by non-discrimination and the pursuit of the best interests of the child. Based on almost universal ratification of the Convention and the resulting consensus that every child, regardless of resources and circumstances, has the right to a basic education of high quality, UNICEF is now working to ensure that the education programmes it supports are developed from a rights perspective.

II. The situation at decade's end

A. The Education For All 2000 Assessment

4. The EFA Framework for Action provides for an end-of-decade assessment of progress. The EFA Forum Secretariat, based at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is coordinating this assessment, with technical input from a Technical Advisory Group consisting of representatives of the five partner agencies (UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and the World Bank). The assessment is now well under way, with strong UNICEF support; many countries are already working on reports, and 11 Regional Technical Advisory Groups have been established. While the world as a whole has made some progress in achieving the Jomtien vision — and some countries quite remarkable success — the general trends have been disappointing.

1. Early childhood care for survival, growth and development

5. The decade has seen a slight growth in formal pre-school enrolments. More significant is the expansion of structured but less formal learning opportunities for young children through home- and community-based programmes and parental education. However, very few countries have access to good data on such programmes, and official data are usually limited to formal pre-schools.

2. Getting children into school and keeping them there

6. The number of children of school-age enrolled in school has increased both globally and for every region in the developing world. But the global goal of EFA by the year 2000 will not be achieved — between 130 million and 150 million children of school-age, two thirds of them girls, are not in school. The growth in enrolment in some regions has barely kept pace with population growth, and some countries show an actual decline in enrolment rates.

7. Despite the commitment made at Jomtien to ensure quality basic education, the focus of most developing countries over the decade has been on increasing access. Partly as a result of that, an alarming proportion of children does not complete even the first four years of school. The regional rates of survival to grade five range from 90 per cent in Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East and North Africa, to 67 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, and 59 per cent in South Asia. There are now more than 150 million children, including adolescents, who have entered school but have dropped out before acquiring literacy and numeracy.

3. The quality of learning

8. Because of the commitment made at Jomtien to define learning outcomes and improve the measurement of learning achievement, some significant progress has been made in this area. The Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) programme, a joint UNESCO/UNICEF activity, has helped 40 countries set goals for learning and improve their capacity to measure and monitor progress. Unfortunately, many of the studies undertaken show low levels of achievement.

4. Paying for education

9. While the world more than doubled its education expenditure per person between 1980 and 1995, expenditure in the least developed countries fluctuated at around $9 per person, while that for developing countries overall rose from $31 to $45. In industrialized countries, the figure more than doubled, from $487 to $1,211. In a decade that has witnessed a substantial decline in official development assistance, deepening poverty and reduced government resources for education have increased the financial burden on many communities and households for education.

B. Major actors and resources in basic education

10. The EFA conference witnessed an unprecedented level of collaboration between the major multilateral and bilateral development agencies and international NGOs. The Consultative Forum on EFA has helped to mobilize continued commitment to EFA and is playing a key role by leading the EFA 2000 Assessment. UNESCO, with which UNICEF, in February 1999, signed a memorandum of understanding outlining areas of common interest and future collaboration, provides leadership in a wide range of education issues, from pre-school to tertiary education. The World Bank has expanded substantially its involvement in education over the decade, and regional development banks are showing increased interest in this sector. UNICEF, which supports education in over 140 countries, continues to be one of the key agencies financing programmes at the country level. The decade has also witnessed new partnerships at the regional level, with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa encouraging collaboration between government ministries and development agencies.

11. New forms of collaboration have developed around the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, especially for low enrolment countries. Sector-wide approaches are also being tried as countries and agencies begin to apply to education the lessons learned in health. In the best of cases, these mechanisms lead to greater donor collaboration, strong government ownership of the reform process, and more effective and efficient investments. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) presents another opportunity for coordinated work in assessing, planning and implementing reform programmes.

12. Of particular importance has been the larger role that families, communities, local governments and NGOs are playing in education. Through decentralization, more authority for providing education is often being devolved to local actors. This should not absolve national Governments from their primary responsibility in this regard, but rather build important linkages between schools and communities and supplement national resources with local support.

C. New developments: what the World Conference on Education For All did not anticipate

13. However prescient the EFA Declaration might have been, it could not anticipate the magnitude of the impact two trends would have on the education of children: (a) the growing risks to child survival and development from abuse and neglect, exploitation and conflict, disease and environmental degradation, as well as from the ravages wrought by HIV/AIDS; and (b) the effects on disparity of such trends as globalization, privatization and, in some cases, decentralization. Nor did the Declaration adequately recognize the growing evidence of the critical importance of both good care in the early years of a child's life and close links across health, hygiene, nutrition and education. Most significantly, perhaps, it did not consider the fundamental concept of child rights as the underlying principle of education for all.

14. Many of those "missing" pieces have become the focus of recent education programming in UNICEF and in preparations for the new decade.

III. The evolution of UNICEF education activities since mid-decade

15. In 1995, the UNICEF Executive Board adopted a basic education strategy (see E/ICEF/1995/16 and E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1, decision 1995/21) which called for the following emphases in UNICEF assistance in education: (a) targeting major system problems such as access, equity and efficiency; (b) improving learning processes and outcomes; (c) developing a systemic and systematic approach to the long-term development and sustainability of education systems; (d) promoting cost-effective systemic reforms targeted at universal education; (e) making effective use of new technologies for disseminating information and strengthening the process of education; (f) ensuring that education plays an important role in re-establishing normalcy in emergency situations; and (g) being concerned with the years beyond primary education.

16. In several key areas for UNICEF, important lessons have been learned since mid-decade which have helped to reinforce and sharpen this strategy. Key elements which have helped in this process were documents prepared for the drafting of the new Global Agenda for Children; the Ninth Innocenti Global Seminar; and *The State of the World's Children 1999* report, which was devoted to education. The lessons learned and adjustments made include the following:

(a) Programming within a rights perspective must lead to a greater effort to ensure that all children are able to exercise their right to a quality basic education. This requires more explicit attempts to find children not in school and get them enrolled;

(b) Among the unreached, girls must continue to be the highest priority. More evidence is proving the value of education for girls, and more experience is showing that focused interventions can make a difference in educational access and quality for girls — and, therefore, for boys as well;

(c) Education can play an important role in helping children in need of special protection, particularly working children and children affected by HIV/AIDS;

(d) Education can also play a major role in situations of instability and conflict, both restoring the essential conditions for learning and providing children with at least one stable, safe and supportive environment;

(e) Building more schools does not necessarily lead to higher enrolment. There are many reasons for not attending school — and many ways to provide a basic education. How "ready" and welcoming schools are to children and how well they reach out to families and communities are important issues to consider in expanding basic education;

(f) The essential core of a good basic education must include, but go beyond, literacy and numeracy. Helping children and youth acquire skills, values and attitudes critical to their future is an essential task for UNICEF. Ensuring that these are successfully transmitted in classrooms requires working with Governments and communities to support both the ongoing renewal and more consistent implementation of basic curricula and teacher development programmes focused on more active learning methodologies;

(g) Data reported from the national level alone can no longer be used to describe the situation of education, but rather must be disaggregated by region, gender and administrative level — and include information on costs — so that evidence of disparities, and their major causes, can be more clearly revealed;

(h) Education systems, educators and development agencies can no longer view classrooms and children in isolation from the wider context in which they exist. The nature of early childhood care and of children's health and nutrition; the risks faced by children, especially during adolescence; the impact of HIV/AIDS; and ever more

frequent conditions of instability — all of these require more attention from educators and education systems;

(i) Africa has been and must remain a regional priority for education, although this cannot be the only area where special efforts are exerted. The Low Enrolment Countries programme, a partnership with the World Bank and UNESCO, through the Special Initiative on Africa and the African Girls' Education Initiative, have particular potential for UNICEF work in Africa.

IV. Challenges in meeting the decade goals

17. The programming priorities for 1998–2000 are important means to accelerate progress towards the World Summit for Children and EFA goals. They also reconfirm the return of UNICEF to the broader definition of basic education reflected in the EFA Declaration, a return even more marked in the Global Agenda for the new century. Whereas the World Summit adopted only an enrolment goal which partially addressed completion, the programme priorities are focused on four areas critical to EFA: early childhood care; primary school enrolment; quality; and girls' education.

A. Early childhood care for survival, growth and development

18. Some 22 countries are attempting to accelerate progress towards the World Summit for Children goal of expanding ECCD activities. The reconceptualization by UNICEF of this area as "early childhood care for survival, growth and development", emphasizing comprehensive, family-focused and community–based programming, and its priority place in the Global Agenda, are now refocusing attention on this critical age.

19. Activities to meet 1998–2000 priorities include the piloting of integrated child-care programmes, more comprehensive national policies for young children, home- and community-based child care and development programmes, parent education projects (with an emphasis on cognitive and psychosocial stimulation), and greater collaboration with NGOs in the provision of child care.

B. Enrolment

20. Over 20 countries are committed to intensifying efforts towards meeting the World Summit for Children enrolment goal. The challenge is to increase both the supply of, and the demand for, education — as much as possible by 2000, but at least as a more solid basis for greater achievements in the future. Strategies being put in place by UNICEF in support of these efforts include:

(a) Pursuing more systematic sectoral planning, where possible with other donors, and advocating for more resources for basic education;

(b) Assisting Governments to gather more accurate and timely data for the year 2000 EFA assessment, at both community and national levels;

(c) Promoting processes of decentralization by strengthening school management and enhancing the role of school-community organizations;

(d) In a few cases, providing greater access to education services, including schools, furniture, teacher training and textbooks;

(e) Supporting projects that help to increase both demand and supply, e.g., mother-tongue education, multi-grade teaching, school clusters, mobile schools and distance education centres, school hygiene and sanitation, and school- and community-based mechanisms to get more children into school.

C. Quality

21. Over 35 countries are committed to raising the quality of basic education by the year 2000. A major challenge is to shift UNICEF programming from top-down approaches to more innovative ways of ensuring that quality improvement is based firmly in individual schools and supported locally as well as by national education systems. Other challenges are to continue investing in two critical areas of quality improvement: the professional development of teachers; and the renewal and implementation of a core curriculum with clearly stated outcomes and usable tools for measuring achievement.

22. In several countries, UNICEF is helping to develop school self-assessment checklists on quality, safety and child-friendliness, and to strengthen parent and community involvement in school management and oversight; participating in the MLA project; and promoting more active learning methods and life skills curricula.

D. Girls' education

23. Because it is so critical to achieving EFA, some 33 countries have singled out girls' education as a 1998–2000 programme priority. The challenges of accelerating progress in this area are many. Meeting them requires policy reforms; social mobilization; analyses of the gender-sensitivity of classrooms, communities and education systems; and concrete actions designed to bring more girls into school and keep them there.

24. UNICEF is supporting countries to implement a wide range of activities, including social mobilization through local language radio broadcasts, sanitary latrines for girls, gender training for staff and gender analyses of textbooks, mobile training for hard-to-reach female teachers, day-care centres for the younger siblings of girls, the provision of single-sex schools and girls' hostels in boarding schools, and community-wide support systems covering female literacy programmes and income-generating activities.

V. Challenges of the new century: strategies for the future

A. A vision for education in the twenty-first century

> "UNICEF's work, and the work of our collaborators in the next decade, must make basic education, of decent quality, available to all children ... the time has come to guarantee that the substance of that education is of such quality that every child will want to stay in school and every parent will want to have his or her children in school." ("The Focus of UNICEF's Work Beyond 2000", CF/EXD/IC/1999–02, 12 February 1999).

25. Following a review of the 1995 education strategy, and taking into account the evolving global context and the ever-larger network of actors in this field, UNICEF is attempting to reorient and refocus its work in education. Based on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the EFA Declaration's expanded definition of basic education, UNICEF commits itself to the following vision:

> All children will be able to fulfil their right to education, meet their basic learning needs, realize their full potential and participate meaningfully in society. This will be achieved through access to high-quality, child-friendly learning environments; comprehensive early childhood care; quality primary schools and equivalent education programmes; expanded opportunities for adolescent education, participation and development; and families and communities that support children to acquire a quality basic education.

26. In order to approach this vision, in partnership with Governments, other United Nations and bilateral agencies, NGOs and civil society, and in recognition of UNICEF resources, experience and comparative advantage, UNICEF will pursue the strategies and areas of action detailed below.

1. Early childhood care for survival, growth and development: getting young children ready for school and for life

27. UNICEF is committed to helping ensure a strong cognitive and psychosocial component in good quality, comprehensive care for young children.

28. Learning begins at birth, and parents and other caregivers are the first teachers of their children. Strategies for helping young children need to be more integrated and comprehensive in nature, including perspectives from education, nutrition, hygiene and health. They must be centred on the child's needs, focused on strengthening the family's caring abilities and firmly based in the resources of the community. They must also help children to be better prepared and more "ready" for school, while helping schools to be more "ready" for young children. Strategies for the UNICEF education sector with regard to early childhood care include:

(a) Identifying the essential psychosocial components, messages, indicators and assessment tools for early childhood care programmes (e.g., in parent and caregiver education programmes and child-care activities);

(b) Building the capacity of UNICEF staff and counterparts to include these components in programming for early childhood care;

(c) Assisting Governments to develop more integrated and comprehensive policies supportive of the young child, especially with regard to their cognitive and psychosocial development;

(d) Ensuring that the first years of primary education are friendly and welcoming to young children.

2. Equity of access and completion: getting all children into school and keeping them there

29. UNICEF is committed to promoting equity of access to, and completion of, quality basic education for all

children, especially for girls and for others living in conditions of disparity, discrimination and exclusion.

30. The State, in collaboration with its partners, has the responsibility to ensure that all children (aged 0–18 years) have the opportunity to acquire quality basic education as a foundation for lifelong learning and active participation in society. This includes, but is not limited to, schools. It is essential to take deliberate, targeted action to address the conditions that cause disparity and exclusion, and to find excluded children and get them into school. As outlined in the medium-term plan (MTP) for 1998-2001 (E/ICEF/1998/13 and Corr.1), UNICEF will support basic strategies in this area which include:

(a) Promoting policy dialogue on the need to reach the unreached and to understand the conditions that contribute to their exclusion (e.g., developing more unified systems of diversified, flexible approaches to basic education);

(b) Mapping and identifying the excluded, i.e. helping Governments and communities to develop school- and community-based mechanisms to trace and track children not in school;

(c) Including the excluded, i.e. developing specific approaches, such as multi-grade classes and more child-centred learning, to get more children into school and keep them there.

31. As confirmed in the MTP, UNICEF will continue to focus on girls' education by promoting multi-country programmes that put in place interventions known to work. High priority will also be placed on working children (through a global programme on education as a preventative strategy for child labour) and children affected by conflict and HIV/AIDS, with further attention being given to children facing particularly daunting obstacles to education (e.g., children with disabilities, nomads).

3. Increased quality: ensuring children learn what they need to learn

32. UNICEF is committed to ensuring access to basic education of good quality — where children can acquire the essential learning tools needed to gain the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes critical to their own lives, the well-being of their families and their constructive participation in society.

33. Quality basic education, based on the EFA Declaration and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is education that successfully transmits literacy, numeracy and life skills. It includes a child's physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual development; addresses each child's unique capacities; encourages active participation in learning; and ensures adequate and equitable learning resources according to national standards for content and performance. Strategies and activities to be pursued include:

(a) Supporting curriculum renewal and implementation, emphasizing literacy, numeracy and life skills;

(b) Developing and disseminating more active, child-centred teaching-learning methodologies, especially those which address the situations of children living under conditions of discrimination and disadvantage (e.g., children in conflict, children affected by HIV/AIDS);

(c) Developing tools for assessing literacy, numeracy and life skills, including for out-of-school children;

(d) Expanding and enriching learning through the media and the use of new communication technologies, especially in support of reducing disparities in educational access and quality.

4. Adolescent education, participation and development: helping adolescents get educated and involved

34. UNICEF is committed to promoting expanded opportunities for adolescents to: (a) acquire basic education where they have not received it; (b) continue to learn, with attention to life skills and preparation for adults roles; and (c) participate in society and contribute to its development.

35. Adolescence will be one of the key areas in UNICEF programming and advocacy in the new decade. Dealing with adolescents is pivotal for addressing other major UNICEF concerns. Adolescence is also a critical stage of a child's development. At a global level, the failings of primary education, as well as of other social services, leave millions of adolescents, particularly girls, without literacy, numeracy or technical skills, unprepared for adult roles, and facing many new violations of their rights and risks to their well-being, of which HIV/AIDS is one of the most critical.

36. UNICEF and its partners have already done considerable work on adolescent health issues. Further work is now needed to ensure that adolescents achieve basic education and to expand their opportunities to participate effectively in society and to promote their rights. This will include:

(a) Promoting dialogue on the importance of providing basic education for out-of-school youth, with a

special focus on girls (e.g., policies to allow easier reintegration into the school system);

(b) Developing projects in "second-chance" basic education and life skills education for youth;

(c) Through the Education for Development programme and Voices of Youth, promoting wider awareness among adolescents of global issues of development and justice within the education sector, media and civil society;

(d) Helping adolescents bring together the experience of both North and South in issues of mutual concern (e.g., child rights, intolerance and racism, conflict and rapid change, environmental degradation, alienation and apathy).

5. Planning, financing and managing education: empowering families and communities

37. UNICEF is committed to enabling families and communities to help fulfil the right of children to education through greater participation in planning and managing educational programmes.

38. Ensuring greater progress towards EFA requires an increase in the resources available to basic education. The 20/20 Initiative offers the potential to increase support for education from both national and international resources and to adjust budget allocations to reflect priorities for basic education and the unreached. The trend towards government-led sectoral development plans should lead to more effective resource mobilization, as should the increasing interest in private sector partnerships and in more effective and speedier debt relief targeting resources for social development programmes.

39. The trend towards decentralization has had mixed results for children. In some contexts it has led to increased community support for education, more equitable access and improvements in quality. In others, it has both placed a greater burden on the poorest households and increased administrative responsibilities without enhancing administrative capacity. Along with the mobilization of more resources for education must come a commitment to ensuring that parents and communities play a greater role as genuine partners in managing basic education. Strategies to be adopted by UNICEF in this area include:

(a) Building management capacities at all levels, especially in the context of decentralization (e.g., strengthening parent-teacher associations);

(b) Assisting the State to mobilize, allocate and manage resources for learning in an equitable and effective manner.

6. HIV/AIDS prevention and control

40. UNICEF is committed to increasing the impact of education on HIV prevention and reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS on education systems and outcomes.

41. More evidence is accumulating on the effectiveness of well-designed and well-implemented life skills programmes focused on HIV/AIDS prevention. Tragically, more evidence is also available which shows the terrible impact of HIV/AIDS on education — on schools and classrooms, on teachers and on students. Informed by the activities of other sectors of UNICEF and other partners, education strategies in this area will include:

(a) Expanding and improving the quality of HIV/AIDS education in the context of life skills programmes;

(b) Helping countries and communities to assess and develop ways to combat the impact of HIV/AIDS on education systems, school provision and quality, and children's learning.

7. Programming in unstable environments

42. UNICEF is committed to providing a more effective educational response to situations of instability and emergency.

43. The increase in the number of children and systems affected by instability poses additional challenges for programming in the next decade. While a focus on rights has forced greater recognition of the moral obligation to meet the basic learning needs of such children, experience has also shown the benefits of restoring normalcy and stability through early attention to education. Previously, programmes focused on the delivery of supplies, often in the form of kits. Now more comprehensive approaches are being adopted which involve working with communities and local authorities to rebuild (or even transform) the system, provide a wide range of support to teachers and adapt the curriculum to the changing needs of the students.

44. UNICEF has been working to incorporate the capacity to respond to emergencies and instability into every country programming process. In the case of education, this means:

(a) Establishing UNICEF capacity at the regional level to play a leading role in early and rapid education assessments;

(b) Developing a range of responses that go beyond a reflex response of providing educational supplies towards a more integrated programme of support for the rehabilitation of education systems;

(c) Improving partnerships with other United Nations agencies to ensure the rapid and effective mobilization and deployment of resources for education.

8. Promoting child-friendly learning environments

45. UNICEF is committed to promoting the establishment of rights-based, child-friendly education systems and, within them, child-friendly schools and other learning environments, especially for excluded groups (e.g., girls, children with disabilities, children affected by HIV/AIDS).

46. Encompassing and summarizing the elements discussed above — of equity and quality, protection and community involvement — is the concept of a rights-based school. Taken together, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the EFA Declaration not only demand basic education for all, they powerfully describe how that education should look. A rights-based school — which ensures that children can realize their rights both in and out of school — can also be seen as a "child-friendly" school. Such a school is healthy and health-promoting, gender-sensitive and academically effective, and both enhances enrolment, completion and learning achievement and helps protect children. Trying to create and sustain such a school can be a strong incentive for a community to support basic education for its children.

47. As mentioned in the MTP, a major objective of UNICEF is to promote the development of child-friendly education systems and, within them, child-friendly schools and other learning environments (e.g., ECCD programmes, complementary basic education programmes). Such a school would:

(a) Reflect and realize the rights of every child: promote and monitor the well-being and rights of all children; and defend and protect all children from abuse and harm, both inside and outside of school);

(b) Understand the whole child, in a broad context: be concerned with what happens to children before they enter the system and once they have left the classroom, i.e. back in their homes, the community and the workplace);

(c) Be child-centred: encourage participation, creativity and self-esteem; promote a structured, child-centred curriculum and teaching-learning methods; and consider the needs of children over the needs of the others;

(d) Be gender-sensitive and girl-friendly: promote parity of girls and boys; eliminate gender stereotypes; and provide facilities, curricula and learning processes welcoming to girls;

(e) Promote quality learning outcomes: encourage children to think critically, solve problems, express opinions and learn how to learn; and help children master reading, writing and calculating and the knowledge and skills required for life in the new century;

(f) Provide education based on the reality of children's lives: ensure that curricula respond to the learning needs of individual children as well as to the general objectives of the education system and the local environment and traditional knowledge of the community;

(g) Be flexible, respond to diversity and act to ensure inclusion and equality of opportunity: meet differing circumstances and needs of children (e.g., gender, culture, social class, ability level); and not stereotype, exclude or discriminate on the basis of difference;

(h) Promote mental and physical health: encourage healthy practices and guarantee sanitary facilities and a safe and joyful environment;

(i) Provide education that is affordable and accessible, especially to families most at-risk through conflict, poverty and other forms of exclusion;

(j) Enhance teacher capacity, morale and commitment: ensure that teachers have sufficient pre-service training, in-service professional development, status and income;

(k) Be family-focused: attempt to strengthen families and help children, parents and teachers establish harmonious, collaborative partnerships;

(l) Be community-based: encourage parents, local government and community organizations to help manage and finance education; and promote partnerships and networks focused on child rights.

48. In order to promote such schools, UNICEF will: (a) refine and disseminate the framework of child-friendly schools, including the development of clear indicators of child-friendly elements; and (b) help to implement child-friendly systems and schools in selected countries, especially through work at school and community levels.

B. External cooperation and partnerships

49. Implementation of these strategies not only demands more intersectoral collaboration within UNICEF in areas of health, nutrition, water and sanitation, child protection, and gender and participation, but also stronger partnerships with other organizations. Links with UNESCO and the World Bank are most obvious and are being strengthened at global, regional and national levels through the EFA assessment and in thematic areas such as early childhood care. UNICEF, for example, has had major input in designing World Bank projects in early childhood care in Indonesia and the Philippines.

50. New partners will also be needed in implementing new strategies. Closer links are required with the World Health Organization and the Save the Children Alliance, both experienced in various aspects of child-friendly schools; with the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in the links between HIV/AIDS and education; and with a wide range of development agencies, NGOs, and private sector organizations involved in learning assessment, adolescence and the use of technology to reduce educational disparities. The UNDAF mechanism should permit even stronger partnerships in the implementation of the strategies outlined above.

C. UNICEF comparative advantages and specific contributions

51. UNICEF has several comparative advantages in carrying out the above strategies in support of realizing the right of all children to a basic education of good quality. These include:

(a) Its organizational mandate and commitment to the rights and well-being of children;

(b) A broad knowledge of, and practical experience with, families, communities, schools and education systems around the world — experience grounded both in policy dialogue and in the field;

(c) A holistic view of children, an expanded vision of education and the value of integrated and multisectoral approaches to learning. A new Programme Division Task Force on Basic Education, with members from several UNICEF sectors, will focus on the comprehensive needs of children;

(d) Awareness of the fact that quality is at the centre of education and that improving the quality of what goes on in a classroom requires sustained commitment and the genuine internalization of innovations in the minds and actions of decision makers and programme implementers;

(e) Awareness that diversity, not standard solutions, must be the norm — that generic models of good education, to be sustainable, must be adapted to local conditions and needs;

(f) Acceptance of the premise that partnerships and networks are needed at all levels of the system — at the community level, but also among the major sectoral and political forces of society;

(g) A strong belief that mobilization and advocacy, at all levels, are essential for development.

VI. Draft recommendation

52. The Executive Director *recommends* that the Executive Board adopt the following draft decision:

The Executive Board,

Having reviewed the report on "Progress, challenges and strategies in basic education" (E/ICEF/1999/14),

Understanding the refinement and further articulation of the "UNICEF strategies in basic education" (E/ICEF/1995/16), adopted by the Executive Board in 1995 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1, decision 1995/21), given the new global and local contexts for children,

Appreciating UNICEF initiatives in assisting countries to achieve the goals for children in the 1990s,

1. *Endorses* the framework proposed for the future work of UNICEF in education, including the vision and strategies set forth in document E/ICEF/1999/14;

2. *Encourages* UNICEF to strengthen its work in helping to:

(a) Ensure strong psychosocial and cognitive elements in comprehensive early childhood care, especially for vulnerable children;

(b) Provide all children — girls and boys — equal opportunities for gaining access to and completing basic education of good quality, especially for groups living in conditions of disparity, discrimination and exclusion (including working children and children affected by conflict and HIV/AIDS);

(c) Expand opportunities for basic education and participation among adolescents at greatest disadvantage and risk;

(d) Strengthen the ability of families and communities to support their children's right to basic education;

3. *Affirms* the need for a stronger role for education in unstable environments and in combating child labour and HIV/AIDS.